

Halvorson: VA Intends to Acquire Silver Cross, Expand Services in Southwest Suburbs

VA, Silver Cross reach informal agreement on acquisition

Washington, DC - Working for over two years to make enhanced health services available to area veterans, Congresswoman Debbie Halvorson (IL-11) announced today the Department of Veterans Affairs intends to acquire parts of the soon to be vacated Silver Cross Hospital, located on the east side of Joliet, to convert it into a VA facility.

Halvorson, who began working with Senator Durbin and local veterans on the project soon after taking office in 2009, called the announcement a "huge victory" for area veterans and families.

"The men and women who served and sacrificed for our country deserve high-quality, accessible health care. With this acquisition, we're delivering on that promise. This is wonderful news for our veterans," said Halvorson.

The current Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Joliet has seen a patient-load increase of 22.4% in the past 5 years. The number of veterans enrolling in the VA health care system in Will County alone is expected to rise 29.1% in the next five years. Si
ilver Cross plans to vacate its Joliet facility in February 2012 to move to a new facility being built in New Lenox.

The acquisition of the current facility will mean expanded health services for area veterans, many of whom currently make a long commute to the Hines VA Hospital in Chicago for services not available at local clinics.

Expanded health services being considered by the VA include expanded women's health services, geriatrics, rehabilitative medicine and physical therapy, neurology, optometry, nutrition, dental, radiology, pharmacy services and an education center. For many of these services, veterans as far away as LaSalle and Kankakee currently need to travel to the Hines VA Hospital in Chicago.

Non-health services being considered for the new facility include a veterans benefits satellite office, counseling center, veterans employment office, and VA health services research office.

According to the VA, key terms have been agreed upon and a final agreement is currently being negotiated.

"Just last week at my veteran's town hall, the feeling among area veterans was that this project absolutely needed to happen soon. This just proves that when we work together we can get the job done. I'm just so happy for our veterans and their families. They deserve it. This is great news for them, and I'm excited for the possibilities for this facility," said Halvorson.

"Jim Canup, who has worked on this issue for years, Margie Woods, and all of the members of the Silver Cross Healthy Community Commission, should be congratulated on their hard work in helping to move this project forward. Many area veterans have fought for this project and their efforts are to be commended. I also want to thank Senator Durbin, who has worked on this project since day one and who is a true champion on veterans issues," said Halvorson.

Halvorson currently serves as the only Illinois member on the House Committee on Veterans Affairs. Her stepson, serving in the Army Special Forces, was injured in Afghanistan in August of 2008. After his injury, Halvorson visited him at Walter Reed and helped with this rehabilitation in Illinois, and in 2009 she visited Afghanistan and Germany as part of her work on the Veterans Committee to review the military medical system and process soldiers go through as they transition to the civilian world and Veterans Affairs medical system after their time with the Department of Defense.

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